



How To Brighten the Night



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Chapter 1 by Elisabeth Ford

There was a time, not so long ago, when the night was very dark. There were no stars, planets, or moon to light the night sky. Once the sun went down, people would stay inside unable to venture out; not because they were afraid of the dark; dark is not scary. It was just hard to see, easy to trip and fall, or lose one's way. There were no streetlights, because there was no electricity. It was dangerous walking around carrying a torch or candle, and lanterns hadn't been invented. People didn't have gas or oil to burn. So, once the sun went down, people stayed inside by the fireplace where they burned the wood they had gathered during the day. They would work by the fireplace where it was warm and bright, and they could repair tools, and tell stories late into the night.

In a village by a river that meandered through a beautiful green valley, there lived three families. Each had a house made of mud brick and straw with a roof of thatched grass. In the first house lived Josh and Melissa and their two son's Justin and his younger brother, Jake. In the second house lived Sam and Sandee and their son Elan. Elan and Jake were very close in age. In the third house lived Jon and Amy and their dog Oscar. Josh, Jon and Sam were brothers, so Justin and Jake were cousins to Elan, and everyone loved Oscar, the dog.

Each day the cousins met and walked to school together. After school they played together before going home to do their homework. They fished, swam and boated in the river. During the long holidays, the older ones helped their parents work in the garden with their parents planting.

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boys, would go up to the pasture in the foothills above the valley to tend sheep with Oscar. Late in the afternoon, his brother Jake and cousin Elan would join him to help bring the sheep home.

When the sun would start to go down, Justin would signal to Oscar with a high pitched whistle to gather the sheep; and, with Justin in front, his brother and cousin in the rear, and Oscar patrolling the flanks, they would march the sheep down the hill and back to their pens where the sheep would spend the night. When the sun finally set, it grew dark and cool even in summer, and you could be sure once the sun had set beyond the western hills, everyone was safe in their houses.

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